

San Geronio Pass Water Agency prepared for another drought year

BY RACHAEL GARCIA
Editor of the Record Gazette

With the dry start to the winter rainy season, the probability of the Pass area entering a multi-year drought is increasing.

But that isn't such a bad thing here due to the fires scorching vegetation, creating instability if it rains and possible flooding said San Geronio Pass Water Agency General Manager Lance Eckhart.

"A dry year here is good because of the fires, but a wet year in Northern California would be beneficial for us,"



Photo by David James Heiss

SGPWA General Manager Lance Eckhart confident agency will still be able to meet customer needs in another dry year.



Courtesy photo
SGPWA General Manager
Lance Eckhart

Eckhart said.

With more than two-thirds of the state experiencing some sort of drought and water supplies just below average, another dry year wouldn't break the bank. But it could point to a trend — multi-year droughts.

In order to meet customer needs during dry years, water agencies have to develop a diverse water portfolio.

Most areas that depend on the state-supplied water also have other sources including groundwater, streams and

their own reservoirs.

2020 was a 20% year for the State Water Project; meaning contractors like the SGPWA were only able to have access to 20% of the region's maximum imported supply.

To meet local demands, the SGPWA board secured water transfers with out of the area State Water Contractors, water purchases from agricultural water rights holders in Central California, and made other smaller water deals.

Eckhart said the upcoming year is not dissimilar from last year.

Presently, State Water Project imported supplies are at 10% but it is early in the season.

Last year was very dry and the Pass Agency was still able to meet customer needs, and Eckhart is confident this year will be the same.

"Last year we had over 10,000 acre-feet of imported water requests that we were able to meet," Eckhart said.

An acre-foot of water is approximately 326,000 gal-

lons, equivalent to a football field one-foot deep.

This year the Board has invested in the Delta Conveyance Project and the Sites Reservoir Project.

Both of these major public works projects should help with long-term supply, but those projects are not expected to yield benefits for 10 years.

Eckhart said, "I have faith that we can continue to meet demands. It does take a lot of flexibility looking for multiple sources of water."

The state Department of Water Resources' eight-precipitation measuring stations across Northern California collected a record-low of 0% of average rainfall in October and 53% in November, according to Associated Press.

Meanwhile, the state's major reservoirs are lower than they were at this time a year ago.

Editor Rachael Garcia may be reached at (951) 849-4586 x120 or by emailing editor@recordgazette.net.



Courtesy photo

Victor Sabala, an environment services worker at Loma Linda University Medical Center was the first to receive the vaccination. It was administered by Mario Seleman, a Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy student.

Loma Linda University Health vaccinates its first group of frontline workers

Health workers at Loma Linda University Health received the organization's first vaccinations against COVID-19 on Dec. 17.

Victor Sabala, an environmental services worker at Loma Linda University Medical Center received the first shot, followed by Bertha Leon, another environmental services worker at the Medical Center and Amber Mejia, an Emergency Department nurse at the Medical Center.

"Being one of the first people to get the vaccine was very empowering and very inspirational," Mejia said. "I

feel very blessed that I was asked to participate in this event.

It's historical for Loma Linda University Health and for everyone going through this pandemic right now."

Approximately 3,800 doses of the vaccine were delivered to Loma Linda University Health on Wednesday, Dec. 16, and will be given to employees throughout the next week.

The vaccinations are being administered by Loma Linda University students from the School of Pharmacy and School of Nursing.

**TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE RECORD GAZETTE,
Call (951) 849-4586 or go to our website:
www.recordgazette.net**

House passes Dr. Ruiz's priorities in COVID Relief Bill

On Monday, the House of Representatives passed a bipartisan COVID relief package.

The legislation includes Ruiz's priorities to provide funds for research related to COVID-19's long-term health effects as well as funds for health programs in underserved Tribal communities.

The package also includes \$600 stimulus checks to individuals, \$300 per week in extended unemployment insurance, money for schools to reopen safely and expand remote learning, and more.

"My constituents are struggling and in need of urgent relief to get through this pandemic," said Dr. Ruiz (CA-36). "While this legislation falls well short of what our country needs, I will support this relief bill because many of my constituents are on the verge of being evicted; losing their business; losing

their job; having their unemployment insurance run out; and are food insecure. Our frontline providers need more resources to combat the virus, and our economy needs assistance. The delay in aid could have been avoided if Senator McConnell would have brought up any of the Democratic aid packages or any Senate package for a vote at an earlier time.

I will continue to fight for robust relief with the new Administration to safely and quickly end the pandemic, boost our local economy, and build back better."

Included in the end-of-year deal is Ruiz's priority laid out in the Tribal Health Care Protection Fund Act.

The bill provides \$1 billion in emergency funding to Tribal health programs to replace lost revenue and other COVID-19 related expenses in underserved trib-



Courtesy photo
U.S. Representative for the 36th District, Dr. Raul Ruiz

al communities.

Also included in the package is \$1.25 billion to support research and clinical trials related to the long-term effects of COVID-19, as well as continued support for Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics for COVID-19 -

something Dr. Ruiz has advocated for this year.

In addition to the fiscal year 2021 appropriations bills, the spending package contains \$900 billion in emergency coronavirus relief to protect the lives and livelihoods of the American people. Among its provisions, the bill provides:

- A new round of direct payments worth up to \$600 per adult and child;

- A \$300 per week unemployment insurance enhancement for Americans out of work, including gig workers, freelancers, and the self-employed;

- \$325 billion for small businesses, including \$284 billion to extend the Payment Protection Program through March 31st and to extend eligibility for tourism boards, chambers of commerce, newspapers, and other non-profits.

- \$81 billion to help schools operate and continue educating through remote learning;

- An extension on the Centers for Disease Control rental eviction moratorium through January 31st;

- \$3.2 billion to help low-income families access broadband;

- \$20 billion for EIDL grants, which provide \$10,000 grants to eligible applicants in low-income communities that did not secure grants because funding ran out.

- \$25 billion in rental assistance to help with rental and energy costs;

- \$13 billion in increased SNAP and child nutrition benefits to help relieve the COVID hunger crisis;

- And \$15 billion for independent movie theaters and entertainment venues.